



Testimony Opposing HB395/SB371
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 10th, 2026
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of **Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOs (CCAIC)**, we submit this testimony in **strong opposition to SB371 / HB395**.

CCAIC is a community-based organization located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, founded in 2015 in direct response to the unchecked expansion of industrial poultry operations and the environmental injustices they impose on neighboring communities. For over a decade, we have worked to protect residents—particularly communities of color, low-income communities, and communities with language barriers—from the disproportionate harms caused by factory farming and other polluting industries.

A History of Harm and Lack of Transparency

In 2015, our organization formed as the poultry industry rapidly expanded the construction of **mega-sized chicken houses across the Eastern Shore**. These projects appeared with little to no notice to adjacent homeowners and communities, leaving residents blindsided by industrial-scale facilities built directly next to their homes, wells, schools, and places of worship.

Residents experienced increased air pollution, water contamination, odors, heavy truck traffic, and declining quality of life without meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that directly affected their health and property. This absence of transparency is precisely what CCAIC has spent years fighting to correct.

SB371 / HB395 Undermines Years of Community Advocacy

SB371 / HB395 directly contradicts everything CCAIC and our partners have fought for over the past decade, including:

- Transparency in permitting and construction processes
- Community access to information through tools like the **AFO Search Tool**
- Maryland's **Environmental Justice initiatives**
- Meaningful public participation before irreversible harm occurs

- Legislative efforts such as the **Community Healthy Air Act**, which sought to address pollution at its source

By allowing CAFO construction to proceed without required discharge permits, this bill strips communities of their ability to engage before damage is done. Once construction begins, community concerns are effectively sidelined, and regulators face pressure to approve projects regardless of documented risks.

Environmental Justice Cannot Be Optional

The Eastern Shore already bears an unfair burden of pollution from industrial agriculture. The communities most impacted are overwhelmingly those with the least political power—rural communities of color, immigrant communities, and low-income residents who rely on private wells for drinking water.

Maryland has publicly acknowledged the reality of environmental injustice. SB371 / HB395 ignores that acknowledgment and instead prioritizes industry expansion over human health, clean water, and community well-being.

Accelerating Harmful Expansion and Industry Consolidation

This legislation would pave the way for **another massive buildout of industrial factory farms**, including:

- Facilities with **eight or more poultry houses on a single lot**
- Increased volumes of manure with nowhere safe to go
- Expansion of **manure-to-energy facilities** that further entrench industrial waste systems

At the same time, small, local family farmers are pushed out—unable to compete with foreign investors and vertically integrated corporations that dominate land use, resources, and political influence on the Eastern Shore.

This bill does not protect agriculture—it **consolidates power**, fuels overproduction, and accelerates environmental degradation.

Conclusion

SB371 / HB395 represents a dangerous step backward for Maryland. It erodes regulatory safeguards, silences impacted communities, and sacrifices public health and environmental protection for the benefit of one powerful industry.

CCAIC urges the General Assembly to **reject SB371 / HB395** and reaffirm Maryland's commitment to transparency, environmental justice, and the right of all communities to clean air, safe water, and meaningful participation in decisions that shape their future.

Respectfully submitted,
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOs (CCAIC)